

Mentoring New Teachers

Why go this route?

- Research indicates that beginning teachers who are mentored are more effective teachers in their early years. Mentored novice teachers tend to focus on student learning sooner and leave teaching at a lower rate.

—National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, 1996

- "To reduce high teacher turnover rates that impose heavy costs on schools, we must improve working conditions, insist on effective teacher preparation and provide support for new teachers."

—Linda Darling Hammond

- "Whether children find learning a joy or a drudgery often depends on the teacher's repertoire of strategies, and whether a teacher develops those strategies depends on professional preparation and a solid support system."

—Patricia Wasley

- Because teacher retention is important to school success.
- Because 50% of new teachers leave the profession within 5 years.

You'll Know You've Arrived When...

- New teachers are contacted after hire, before the first day of school.
- Each new teacher has an active and competent mentor.
- Mentors and new teachers have time to observe and reflect together.
- Regular orientation meetings are designed to nurture the professional growth of new teachers.

Construction Zone



It's about TIME

- Mentor teachers should plan to devote at least an hour per week to observation and reflection.
- New teachers will need an hour per week with their mentors, and an after school orientation meeting each month.




Potential COSTS

- Professional development facilitators vary from \$500 to \$1500 per day.
- Substitute teachers to provide observation and consultant time for mentors and mentees.
- \$25–\$100 for books and materials for new teacher workshops.

The Process

*A step-by-step guide
to integrating new teachers
into a Learning Community
of professional teachers.*

NOTE: Steps marked with a 
are accompanied by one or more
inserts, included in this packet.

End the year with preliminary preparation for next fall.

- 1 Decide to create a mentoring program** for new teachers in your building or district.
INSERTS A-G for Step 1 provide a definition and numerous explanations and support materials for beginning a teacher mentoring program.
- 2 Recruit as mentors experienced and competent teachers** who are capable of being role models for new teachers.
Organize an orientation for mentors describing (or developing with them) the expectations for mentor involvement. See “Resources” for possible sources for mentor training programs. INSERT for Step 2 is a self-reflective checklist to help candidates decide.
- 3 Recruit a New Teacher Orientation committee** to plan orientation meetings in the building once a month starting in the fall.
INSERTS A-H for Step 3 offer suggested content ideas for professional development topics, observation pointers, a planning calendar, a problem-solving model (article on “Breaking through Isolation with New Teacher Groups”) and a sample agenda for new teacher orientation meetings. Two articles included in INSERTS I (“What New Teachers Need to Learn”) and J (“Finding New Teachers and Keeping Them”) will help the committee focus on ideas for retention and also serve as a catalyst for discussion at the first gathering.
Ask staff in the spring to make a list of the top ten reasons why it’s great to work at your school (see INSERT K for Step 3 for a form), and distribute it at the first new teacher orientation meeting, or include it with the letter sent to teachers after they have been assigned to your school (see INSERT for Step 5).
- 4 Create schedules** that allow mentors and new teachers to meet weekly, new teachers to observe veteran teachers, and new teachers to improve their practice without being overburdened.
See INSERT for Step 4 for ideas.
Begin the orientation process.
- 5 Call to welcome new teachers** and send a letter explaining the mentoring program as soon as you receive confirmation that they have been hired.
Set a time, as soon as possible, to give them their schedules and supplies. INSERT A for Step 5 is a sample letter to send to new teachers.
- 6 Assign each new teacher to a mentor** and provide both with the “Expectations” outlined in INSERT for Step 6 (or your alternative).
- 7 Set up a one-day new teacher orientation session** before the beginning of school. INSERTS A-F for Step 7 include a questionnaire for new teachers, getting acquainted activities, checklists, and a glossary. Check collective bargaining agreements for conditions for setting up such a program.
- 8 Continue orientation and mentoring support during the year.** INSERTS A and B for Step 8 suggest ways to stay on track.
- 9 Celebrate and evaluate!** Ask for suggestions for improvement next year. INSERTS A and B for Step 9 include questions and a rubric for the evaluation. Give new teachers and their mentors some relaxed time together at the end of the year.

Getting more mileage from mentoring new teachers

How reflecting together about the values that are underlying school practices can benefit your school in regard to the following initiatives:

No Child Left Behind (NCLB)

- NCLB includes provisions stating that all teachers in core academic areas must be highly qualified by the end of the 2005–2006 school year. It also requires that newly hired teachers in Title I programs or schools be highly qualified immediately. (U.S. Department of Education, NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND: A TOOLKIT FOR TEACHERS, p.11, ED PUBS, Washington, D.C., 2003) As experienced educators we probably agree that it is impossible for a brand new teacher to be “highly qualified.” NCLB provides funds to states and districts to conduct programs focused on improving teacher quality (Title II, Title IV, and title V).

Education Yes!

- In addition to achievement data, Michigan's accreditation system includes three measures which are closely linked to teacher quality. The second indicator, instructional quality, is specifically defined as the process the school uses to improve the quality of instruction provided to students. Mentoring is such a process.



Resources

Books

A Better Beginning: Supporting and Mentoring New Teachers.

Marge Scherer (Editor). ASCD. Alexandria, VA. 1999.

Designed for mentors who want new teachers to succeed and who need good strategies for helping make that happen.

Change Handbook: Group Methods for Shaping the Future

Peggy Holman and Tom Devane. Bennett-Koehler Publishers, June 1999.

Holman and Devane have assembled 18 proven group methods for helping groups shape their futures. Chapter 15 addresses appreciative inquiry.

A First Year Teacher's Guidebook

Bonnie Williamson. Dynamic Teaching Company; 2nd edition (September 1998)

An instructional manual for new teachers, this book details a classroom management system and includes preparations for the first day, month and year of teaching. Also included is information on rural, urban and multi-cultural students; dealing with stress; threats and violence; technology in the classroom and much more. Very practical, and lots of fun.

The First Days of School: How to Be an Effective Teacher

Harry Wong. Harry Wong Publications, 1998.

Very practical, research-based strategies for both new teachers and seasoned veterans. This one is a classic that "vets" will want to discuss with new teachers.

Mentoring Programs

New Teacher Academy.

Oakland Schools. 248/209-2000
www.oakland.k12.mi.us

Pathwise Framework Induction Program for Beginning Teachers

Educational Testing Service (ETS)
www.teachingandlearning.org
1-800/297-9051.

Port Huron Public Schools Teacher Induction Program is a nationally recognized model.

Teacher Mentor Training Guide
www.teacher-mentoring-resources.com

Other Tools

Find tools for organizing formal class meetings at:

www.responsiveclassroom.org

People

Specialists

Most Intermediate School Districts have a specialist working with schools on teacher support in their service areas.

Coaches

The *Alliance for Building Capacity in Schools* website lists coaches whose training has been provided by Michigan State University and supported by the Michigan Department of Education. Some are active in working with teacher support and growth in Michigan schools. Please visit:

www.abcscoaches.org

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